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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0467
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 1880
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0647
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0284
RHMFISS/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 000659

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UN](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [IR](#) [LE](#) [SU](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: A/S SILVERBERG'S JANUARY 25 MEETING WITH MIDDLE
EASTERN AFFAIRS DG OKUDA

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Japan views positively recent steps taken by the United States to reinvigorate the Middle East Peace Process and is hopeful that progress will be made, MOFA Director General for Middle Eastern and African Affairs Norihiro Okuda told visiting Assistant Secretary for International Organizations Kristen Silverberg on January 25, in Tokyo. He also described Japan's "Corridor of Peace and Prosperity" initiative and discussed with her the difficulties being faced by the Palestinians as they seek to resolve internal differences. A/S Silverberg assured Okuda of the Administration's commitment to the peace process but reminded him that ultimately it is the parties themselves who must decide to make meaningful progress. She also pressed Japan to make a meaningful contribution to Lebanon, stressing the importance of financial as well as political support for the Siniora government. Okuda replied that it would be difficult for Japan to make more than a small contribution. Other topics discussed included Japan's concern over the high cost of United Nations assistance programs, the fact that both Japan and the United States are taking steps to comply with UNSCR 1737 regarding Iran, and the situation in Darfur.
END SUMMARY.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

¶2. (C) DG Okuda opened the meeting by saying Japan is impressed by recent steps by the United States toward reengaging in the Middle East Peace Process. He observed that achieving peace between the Palestinians and Israelis is a very difficult undertaking and it would be completely understandable if the United States were to choose to remain disengaged given the more immediate pressing concerns in the region, i.e., Iraq, Iran, Lebanon. That said, Okuda wondered how sincere these most recent initiatives are. Was the Secretary's trip simply a fact-finding, listening-mode visit,

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or was it undertaken with a plan of action in mind?

13. (C) A/S Silverberg replied the Secretary and the President are sincere about making progress toward peace in this critical region, but that it has always been the Secretary's position not to engage in meetings for meetings' sake, and it is clear to us that peace will not be achieved in the region unless the underlying conditions are in place, namely, the presence of parties who are committed to peace. Accordingly, the main purpose of the Secretary's visit was to listen to the parties and to assess whether there is an opportunity to make progress. The United States remains committed to the sequencing of the road map. The Quartet meeting had been anticipated before the Secretary visited the region, as it is important to get the new Secretary General involved and up to speed on the process.

14. (C) Japan welcomes the holding of a Quartet meeting, said Okuda, and even though Japan wishes it were part of the process, Tokyo supports its work nonetheless. He said he hopes the Quartet meeting will bring new and positive developments but is concerned that negotiations between Palestinian factions toward the formation of a unity government are going nowhere. It will be difficult for Japan to resume support to the Palestinian government unless there is a unity government. In addition, it is hard to see how the peace process will be able to move forward in the absence of an acceptable Palestinian partner.

15. (C) The United States agrees that the intra-Palestinian conflicts need to be resolved, explained A/S Silverberg, and we realize there are some risks involved in holding early elections. We are trying to empower Abu Mazen to strengthen his hand. Okuda told her that Israeli Foreign Minister Livni had visited Tokyo the previous week and that, in general, the

Japanese were encouraged by her talk of how Israel is trying to support Abu Mazen. That said, it is Japan's belief that the Israelis should have extended such support much sooner, prior to the last elections. In the meantime, Japan will continue to provide financial support intended to bolster confidence building measures directly to the Presidential office of Abu Mazen.

16. (C) Okuda expressed his personal view that even extending financial and material support to Abu Mazen and his Fatah organization is problematic, as Fatah's problems with corruption and mismanagement are known to pose concerns. In addition, Abu Mazen must be supported very delicately so as not to detract from his ability to portray himself as an independent, Palestinian leader who is not beholden or connected to outsiders such as the United States, the European Union, or other donors. Broadly speaking, the same can be said of all Arab countries. Even leaders who support reform must not be seen by their people as too closely associated with outside influences. But at the same time, they need support and assistance from the outside to initiate change. They need political will and resources.

17. (C) Okuda asked for A/S Silverberg's view on the role of the United Nations in the peace process. She explained that the United States views the Quartet as the principle mechanism and is opposed to a broader role for the UN in this process, pointing out that the design of the organization - large and unwieldy - makes it poorly suited to play a role as an effective negotiator. In addition, by its own actions, the UN has made it clear to us that Israel cannot get a fair hearing within the organization. To illustrate her point, she provided Okuda with a graph showing the number of condemnatory resolutions targeting Israel introduced in the UN. She agreed with Okuda that perhaps the UN might have a role to play in helping to "seal a deal" when the time comes, but this will depend on the desires of the parties.

18. (C) With regard to Japan's contributions to the peace process, Okuda described for A/S Silverberg Japan's "Corridor of Peace and Prosperity" initiative that involves Japan, Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians. This initiative was

proposed by former Prime Minister Koizumi and calls for the construction of an "agro-industry" park in the West Bank that would provide jobs for Palestinian youths and also export those products through Jordan to the Gulf states and others. All the parties support this concept in general, but Israel wants to make sure there is no Hamas involvement on the Palestinian side. Japan would like to host a meeting of the parties soon, but this might not be possible unless Israel can be assured Hamas is not involved. Okuda said he briefed Department officials on this initiative during a recent trip to Washington but wanted A/S Silverberg to be aware of it as well.

LEBANON

¶9. (C) Following up on Okuda's earlier remark that outside powers need to provide Middle East reformers with political will and resources, A/S Silverberg pointed out that this is precisely the case with Lebanon. The UN has an important role to play in Lebanon. A Security Council resolution has been enacted and must be enforced. And the UN can play a positive role in enabling a commission to investigate the Hariri assassination. The Siniora government needs resources and support to help it to deliver services to the people of Lebanon. The United States will be making a major financial commitment at the upcoming Paris III conference and hopes that Japan will also be able to play a significant role.

¶10. (C) Okuda replied by noting the Secretary's call to Foreign Minister Aso two days earlier and said that Japan had responded by agreeing to send the Minister of Environment to the conference, even though this involved much wrangling on the domestic political scene given the fact the conference date conflicts with the opening session of the Diet. For this reason, FM Aso was unable to attend. With regard to possible assistance, Okuda said Japan will only be able to offer a very small additional grant, given the fact that Lebanon is too wealthy to qualify for ODA assistance. With regard to possible loans, this too is problematic, as Lebanon still has one very old loan that is still active, and the Diet will be unlikely to grant additional loans if this is the case. On the subject of debt relief, Japan will be willing to consider this option as long as it part of an international arrangement. Tokyo will not offer debt relief to Lebanon on a bilateral basis. In any case, Lebanon's debt to Japan, at \$20 million, is less than one percent of Lebanon's overall debt. A/S Silverberg urged Japan to take measures to provide critical assistance to the Siniora government.

¶11. (C) Japan also questions the need for large donations because it believes that Lebanon's problems are not economic, replied Okuda. Lebanese expatriates have large amounts of cash outside the country and the reconstruction efforts they have undertaken in the past on their own have been impressive. It is likely this performance will be repeated when the political situation improves. What is more important is that the majority of the people support the government, so steps must be taken to reach this goal without it appearing to be tied to outside intervention. Okuda agreed that economic support helps, but opined that sometimes the focus on economic assistance overshadows the need to resolve political issues.

¶12. (C) A/S Silverberg rejoined that in Lebanon, the need for both political and economic support are related and equally important. In the days preceding the war the economic situation in Lebanon was promising. Now there is terrible economic insecurity and a critical lack of jobs. The Siniora government is in a competition with Hizbollah to deliver services and help to the people. The Prime Minister must be able to demonstrate that his government can provide services better than Hizbollah, and for this reason it is critical that the international community help enable him to do so. He can't do this without foreign financial contributions, she argued.

UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

¶13. (C) Okuda said that as Ambassador to Afghanistan he had enjoyed positive relations with a variety of UN agencies working in the region, but lamented that the fees the UN pays consultants are way too high. Japan has raised for some time the need to get control of the expenses incurred by UN aid organizations and, said Okuda, hoped the United States shares this view. The United States, replied A/S Silverberg, agrees and would like to see the UN focus more on technical assistance than cash on delivery of ODA; the UN should not try to be the World Bank. The UN has a valuable role to play, as it has credibility and can work in countries where western donors can't, but not be a principal deliverer of ODA.

IRAN

¶14. (C) Japan does not believe it needs to enact new laws to comply with UNSCR 1737, said Okuda. Interministerial discussions have been under way since the resolution was adopted to decide what Japan needs to do to be in compliance. The outstanding issues involve technical problems with definitions regarding possible dual-use items. A/S Silverberg explained that the United States already had comprehensive sanctions in place against Iran but that we are now taking additional steps to fully implement our obligations, citing the Bank Sepah designation.

DARFUR

¶15. (C) The issues surrounding Darfur are much more complex than he had originally realized, Okuda said. The attitude of Khartoum toward the approval of UN activities is very disappointing. Nevertheless, Japan wants to keep moving forward with the current process, rather than simply giving up on it. Japan cannot resume assistance to Sudan until the Darfur issue is settled. In the meantime, Tokyo will watch and wait. The United States, explained A/S Silverberg, supports the three-phased Kofi Annan plan but is skeptical about Bashir's commitment to implement Phase Three. We believe he must be tested by the deployment of the "heavy package" of UN forces to assist the African Union peacekeepers already there. If he rejects them or other difficulties arise, the United States is likely to propose tougher measures, although we hope it does not come to this. She confirmed to Okuda that at this time there are no United States troops in Sudan, as any such deployment would feed Bashir's propaganda claim that Sudan is being invaded by outsiders.

¶16. (C) Okuda concluded that it is up to Sudan to decide if it will remain a single nation. If it were to split into two, this would lead to much damage in the region. Although there may be bigger problems in the world to deal with, Darfur is an issue that requires more attention. A/S Silverberg asked whether it would be possible for Japan to consider providing support to troop-contributing countries, to which Okuda replied that Japan already makes large contributions to the UN Peace Keeping Operations budget. It is not possible to send Japanese troops to Sudan without special legislation, and the coming months in Japan will be politically charged with two major election cycles coming up. Although he senses that the attitude of the Japanese people to dispatching peacekeeping troops is becoming more "normal" than it used to be (meaning there is growing support for such missions), given the domestic political season, most politicians don't want to touch this issue at this time. However, Okuda agreed to discuss with his counterparts in the Foreign Policy Bureau whether any mechanisms exist for providing assistance to troop-contributing countries.

PARTICIPANTS

¶17. (U) The following participants were present:

United States

Assistant Secretary Kristen Silverberg
International Relations Officer Raymond Hotz
Embassy Tokyo Political Section Deputy Carol Reynolds
Control Officer Scott Hansen
Notetaker Evan Reade

Japan

Director General Norihiro Okuda
First Middle East Division Deputy Director Jiro Kanzawa
Second Middle East Division Deputy Director Masaki Yasumatsu

¶18. (U) A/S Silverberg has cleared this cable.
SCHIEFFER